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itself to the lives of all people, young or old, in the city, in one way or another and as a result those who are able to contribute to its support do so freely, because they feel that their money is assisting in building up something of benefit to all people for all time.

The next task will be the establishment of a fund for maintenance and

another for the purchase of works of art, and to arrange for the building of additional galleries, the need of which is imperative. That which has already been accomplished is but the first small step in the creating of not a small museum but of an institution which will one day take its place among the important museums of the world.

## SMALL MUSEUMS CONNECTED WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS\*

BY FRANK JEWETT MATHER, JR.

MARQUAND PROFESSOR OF ART AND ARCHEOLOGY, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

THE subject of small dependent museums may recall the title of one of Charles Lamb's most delightful essays, "Poor Relations." This such museums often are in a double sense: poor relations of the great museums because of limited staff and budget, and poor relations of their own governing institution because it neglects them. Here I should except such normal and desirable adjuncts to libraries as print departments. They are generally well managed and relatively well supported. Concerning them we are to hear from an authoritative witness, Mr. Frank Weitenkampf. I am thinking of those miscellaneous art collections that accrue casually and chiefly by gift to libraries, historical societies and colleges. Such gifts often represent, not the needs of the institution or community, but the personal taste of the giver, which is frequently capricious and bad. These gifts impose heavy burdens of housing, exhibition, cataloguing and conservation, without providing funds and persons by whom these burdens may be carried. Ordinarily the regular ongoing of the parent institution taxes an inadequate staff to the utmost. Such a staff commonly brings to the museum no special knowledge and

naturally rather little zeal. Under these conditions the little museum, often a single hall, is soon taken for granted by the community, and save for an occasional stranger, completely disregarded. Poor in possessions, poor in directing wit and energy—that is the usual lot of the small dependent museum the world around. What is true of the gallery of a provincial Italian academy will be true of a university gallery in Germany, or a collegiate museum in America.

Because I am aware that it is subject to many exceptions I have not spared the black in my picture of the small dependent museum. And because I work every day in a small university museum, which is as far from being the worst as it is from being the best of its kind, I am emboldened, from that middle point of vantage, both to sound the depths and scale the heights of my theme. Sometimes by a miracle of luck and devotion the small museum works out well. By the generosity of friends of the college, Bowdoin received the Walker Art Gallery, one of Charles McKim's best buildings, fitted with every convenience and luxury save that of ventilation. The artistic heritage of an early donor, Hon. James Bowdoin, provided a rather non-

\*A paper read at the Fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Arts, held in Washington, D. C., May 15 and 16, 1913.

descript but still available collection of paintings by old masters, with more than a hundred admirable drawings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There were as well in the Bowdoin gift noteworthy early American portraits. To this nucleus was added a gift of modern European and American sketches, paintings and objects of art, enough to represent the field in epitome and fill a small gallery. The remaining gallery was filled by a couple of cases of Greek and Roman antiquities—marble fragments, vases and figurines, a small but precious donation. About this collection hang some American pictures of the middle period, Japanese scrolls, Colonial relics and some potteries. In the entrance rotunda are fine lunettes by Vedder, La Farge, Cox and H. O. Walker. In résumé, the building itself is a notable example of the best American architecture and mural painting. The collections represent the great periods of European painting by copies, secondary pieces and excellent original drawings. Classical antiquity and later American and European art are represented by minor well-chosen originals, while the collections afford a fair introduction to the minor arts of the Far East. I should earlier have mentioned good Assyrian sculptures from Layard's Nineveh excavations. First, no collection badly overbalances the rest, next a curator has been raised up to label, catalogue and tastefully arrange the collections. A curator who has time, knowledge and energy really to care for the collections of a small museum, besides performing other heavy duties, is so rare a phenomenon that I name with especial respect Professor Henry Johnson, Professor of Romance Languages in Bowdoin College, and incidentally but most effectively Curator of the Walker Art Gallery.

I have dwelt upon this exceptional case in which approximately the right collections have got into the building under the right curatorship, that I may more strikingly descend once more into the gloom with which in honesty my theme should be invested.

Let me take the case of the museum

I know most intimately—that of Princeton University. About twenty-five years ago we received a large portion of the ceramic collections of that fine connoisseur, the late William C. Prime. The gift enabled Princeton to appeal for a museum building and a portion of a larger building was erected and immediately overfilled with the Trumbull-Prime collection of porcelain and pottery. Subsequently we have received a few pictures, old and new, a remarkable collection of small Japanese wood and ivory carvings, *netsukes*, some excellent bits of Greek and Gothic sculpture and many architectural casts representing the Syrian expeditions of Professor Howard Crosby Butler. From these expeditions we have also gained coins, glass and other tomb objects. In addition we have a select exhibit of casts of classical and Renaissance sculpture, and a considerable series of Greek and Roman coins. I have gone into this not very impressive inventory because it represents an important principle. All the miscellaneous exhibits enumerated above are germane to our purpose and useful to our academic community. We teach European art in its great historic periods. Most of the objects acquired since the Trumbull-Prime collection are constantly used in our courses as illustrative material. The Trumbull-Prime collection, though containing many objects of intrinsic beauty and interest is, except for a few Greek vases and minor classic fragments, dead material and a constant embarrassment. We have to crowd it or put parts of it in storage every time a case is needed for acquisitions. In short, Princeton is very rich in porcelain and pottery which is of slight use locally and might be most valuable elsewhere. Much of the material which is dead with us would immediately assume life if it could be moved ten miles to the pottery town of Trenton. From our early blue Staffordshire, the so-called souvenir pieces, we could fit out charmingly a couple of American historical museums of the Washington headquarters type. Our surplus Persian tiles which we can not exhibit would serve a useful decorative



LIBRARY, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

and instructional exhibit elsewhere. Aside from such mislocation of material, fine in itself, our major exhibit is a constant source of criticism. When we have to replace a useless case by one that aids in our teaching, the neighbors complain. We are criticized because we do not elaborately label and catalogue the Trumbull-Prime collection, and we reply

in vain that we have neither the time nor the money for such a task, and that we none of us are experts in the pottery and porcelain of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Sometimes we wish the Trumbull-Prime collection were in the depths of Carnegie Lake, and then we disclaim so ungracious a sentiment and comfort ourselves with the reflec-



TRUMBULL-PRIME COLLECTION OF POTTERY AND PORCELAIN. PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

tion that without this for us rather useless collection we should probably not have our distinctly useful museum. So the Princeton art professor sinks back resignedly into his normal condition of a lamb in a china shop.

Not, however, without one word of protest. This mislocation of museum material which has come almost by

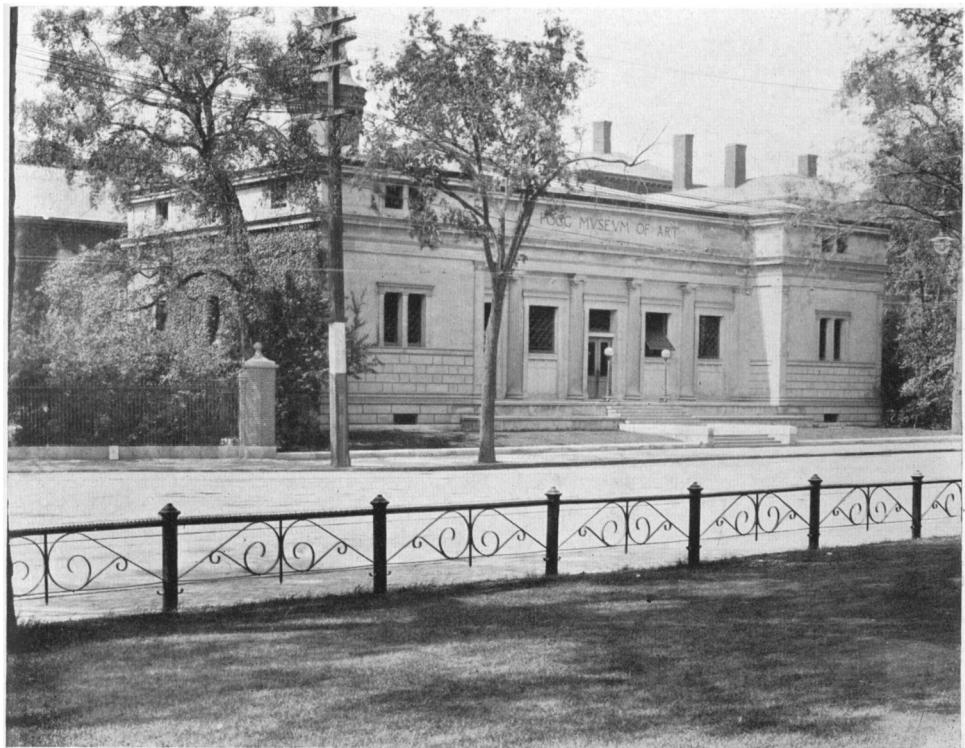
chance can be remedied by taking thought. If Princeton could pass on merely her superfluous china and pottery to museums that need such exhibits, taking in exchange objects that Princeton needs, or for that matter taking nothing, the efficiency of our little university museum would be tripled. Before entering on this promising theme

let us insist that the plight of Princeton is not exceptional but typical. Almost all small dependent museums have grown by casual gifts and without regard to the scope of the parent institution or the needs of the community. Having illustrated the case in an obscure example let me complete it in an illustrious one. The New York Historical Society has, to its constant embarrassment, the most valuable collections of Egyptian objects and European painting owned by any similar body in America. Let us trace the wholly fortuitous origins of this mislocation of valuable exhibits. The Society, now more than a century old, was founded for the purpose of historical study, with especial reference to the field of American history and that of the State and city of New York. It has gradually built up a collection of historical prints and portraits which are most germane to its general and specific purpose. In contrast with this slow and normal accretion of relevant and useful material, are four special collections only one of which has any appropriateness in the halls of the Society. In 1856 the Society decided to maintain an art gallery. Since American art was chiefly in view this scheme was entirely congruous with the general aims of the Society. In 1858 the Society fell heir to the pictures of the old New York Gallery of Fine Arts. This with other gifts constituted a valuable illustration of the early stages of the fine arts in America. It still is a distinction for the Society to be able to exhibit its Coles, Doughtys and Durands. But from the social prominence of the organization and its possession of a gallery, it soon became the recipient of gifts only loosely relevant or quite alien to its aims. Thus in 1860 the Society secured the purchase of the remarkable Abbott collection of Egyptian antiquities. Because it was put in the wrong place this exhibit is relatively neglected and unvisited. In defense of the public-spirited citizens who secured it, be it said that it was a question of giving it to the Society or losing it for New York. In 1867 Mr. Thomas J. Bryan gave to the Society his important

gallery of some two hundred pictures representing the history of Christian painting; in 1882 Mr. Louis Dürr bequeathed a large miscellaneous collection of pictures of which the Society selected about one hundred and fifty. The Abbott, Bryan and Dürr collections constitute an impressive possession, but aside from any accruing prestige, which has not been much, for the galleries are little visited, these possessions have ever since been an embarrassment to the Society and a drag upon its normal activities. There are no funds for the conservation of these collections. Many of the objects have deteriorated, some have been saved from impending ruin only by taxing heavily the generosity of officers and members of the Society. The routine arrangement and care of the collections fall upon officials who are already burdened by the normal work of the meetings and of the library. In short, the Society suffers from having accepted an honorable but unnatural charge, and the collections would immediately assume tenfold value if transferred to a general museum of art. I do not see how the New York Historical Society could have avoided these alien responsibilities, but I am convinced that if it had loaned these collections indefinitely to the Metropolitan Museum in the early seventies, the Society would have been well rid of a white elephant and the Metropolitan Museum would have assumed in a moment a dignity which it took ten years to attain.

It would be idle or worse to have presented the case of the small dependent as a chapter of accidents and comedy of errors if I had no plan for relief. The material problem is to get the wrong objects out of the small museum and to get the right objects in; the personal problem is to secure the right sort of curatorial management. Like most things in life these are problems in technical adjustment which should yield to intelligent analysis and co-operation. Let me state in brief propositions, which may serve for matter of debate, my notions as to the leading lines of reform.

First as to bringing the right objects into the right museum.



THE FOGG MUSEUM, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

1. *Publicity.* There should be a recognized organ, possibly *ART AND PROGRESS*, in which every museum should periodically advertise its desiderata and the class of objects it is ready to loan or exchange.

2. *Exchange and loans.* Such a clearing house would naturally result in numerous exchanges and loans, bringing about a redistribution of museum exhibits according to the particular needs of each institution. Apart from such loans and exchanges between small institutions, the mere publication of desiderata would give the large museums an opportunity to supply the smaller from duplicates or objects in storage. Such a relation would be mutually advantageous, relieving the congestion in the great museums and providing the smaller ones with desirable exhibits which otherwise they could not attain.

3. *Concerning indefinite loans.* Whenever considerations of trust hamper or seem to prevent such reasonable ex-

change and loans, recourse should be had to that beneficent and saving transaction the indefinite loan. In Europe its convenience has been long apparent. Practically it has the advantage of a permanent deposit, while in the very rare instance of protest by heirs or others, the lending museum would find itself safely within the letter of the law.

The successful planning and executing of such loans and exchanges implies a very alert and conscious attitude on the part of museum managers. In some cases these qualifications are already present in high measure among the officials of the smaller museums. In all cases I think such officials would rise to new opportunities. No longer hopelessly committed and limited by the errors and haphazard of the past, the curators of small museums would approach their difficult task with new enthusiasm and would gird themselves for more valiant scholarly and executive effort. But in the considerable reorganization of small

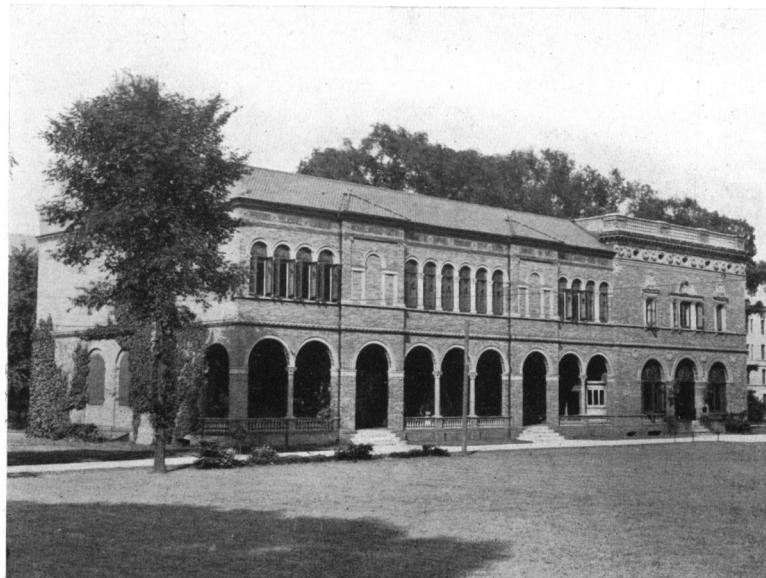
museums contemplated in this address I assume that the aid of the large museums would be indispensable. And this reinforcement might take several forms.

1. *As to purchases.* Many small museums have funds for acquisitions but insufficient to justify travel by the curator or employment of a special purchasing agent. Here it seems that the great museums might by courtesy authorize their traveling curators and agents to buy for less favored institutions. Such incidental service would not seriously burden a purchasing agent. It would also vary his routine and bring additional goodwill among the dealers to his own museum. Such a plan was proposed at the last convention of the Archeological Institute by Professor Currelly of the Royal Museum, Toronto.

2. *As to cataloguing and labeling.* This important service curators of dependent small museums are often for obvious reasons unable to perform adequately. And here, again, it seems as if the great museums might come to the rescue. Obviously they could not often detach for such extraneous service their

highly paid officials, but it is probable that every great museum will soon have a corps of voluntary assistants, virtual apprentices, at nominal pay or none. Such apprentices could readily be assigned to outside service at their expenses or little more. Such cataloguing and labeling would mean an additional opportunity for education, would enable the great museums to increase their staff of apprentices in training, would, in short, aid towards that desideratum, systematic training for museum officials.

I have said nothing about arrangement of exhibits, lectures, traveling shows, loan exhibitions, topical or anniversary displays, because all these things lie properly in the hands of the local curator. It is here that his personality and zeal may most effectively express themselves. Moreover, all such matters are reasonably well handled at present in many cases, and if we ever get the right objects into the right museums, that fact alone will prove a most powerful incentive to develop the resourcefulness of a class of museum curators who now work under discouraging disadvantages.



ART MUSEUM, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.